

Economic topics dominate South Tahoe council meeting

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe's economic vitality is what Tuesday's City Council meeting was all about.



A variety of agenda items, while separate and not even lumped together, all focused on the city's future.

Carl Ribaldo with Strategic Marketing Group started the morning off Oct. 16 with a presentation about the economic impact of the South Shore Vision Plan.

Lauren Thomaselli with the city spoke mostly about the success of special events during the summer, but also some of the issues with putting them on.

How to proceed with area plans – which could be an economic stimulus – was resolved.

The last item of the day had to do with partnering with El Dorado County when it comes to developing a recreation plan for the area.

While not all the items required action, it was obvious recreation and entertainment are what the city wants to focus on. This council wants to be instrumental in crafting policy that would ideally be a stimulus for the area.

The five agree the state line cannot be a barrier, especially when tourists cross it without knowing what county or state they are in. But the electeds also are cognizant of wanting to

do what's right by the people who put them in office.

Even Ribaudó said, "Why not call it the California Core?"

So often the Stateline area is referred to as the "casino corridor" when the reality is most of the changes that are proposed are in South Lake Tahoe. This is where Heavenly Village and the gondola for Heavenly Mountain Resort are, and where one-day a project will be built across the street.

Ribaudó's presentation in large part focused on lodging.

"We are out of sync with our competitors who have a smaller lodging inventory," Ribaudó told the council.

Much has been said about how the South Shore, South Lake in particular, has more hotel rooms than it will ever fill. And many of those rooms come with a small price, which in turn drives the average daily room rate down. This dominoes into fewer tax dollars, mostly via transient occupancy tax.

When it comes to figuring out what to do on this side of the state line and at the Y, the council wants to simultaneously develop area plans. That's the name of the new document the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency will require once the Regional Plan update is adopted.

The city and TRPA will share the costs of a planner to make this work. It's still likely a consultant will need to be hired to do some of the more technical work.

That position is estimated to cost about \$100,000. The money will come out of unassigned reserves.

It's also possible that person could help the city as it develops a recreation master plan.

To that end, the city is contemplating jumping on El Dorado County's coattails. The county has put up \$10,000 for RO Anderson to assess the inventory of the county's recreation

components – public and private assets.

Coleen Shade, with the consulting firm, told the council her firm is also looking at the sphere of influence in regards to inventory, so places like Kahle are part of the equation.

The inventory tally should be done some time in November, if not sooner.

The city's rec subcommittee of Councilmembers Hal Cole and Angela Swanson will be conferring with City Manager Nancy Kerry and possibly county folks to discuss further what the city could get out of partnering with the county in going forward with finding someone to come up with a recreation master plan.

In other action:

- A report on the rebar and concrete at the never-built convention center site shows it is structurally sound.